

813
2444
A
S E R M O N

preach'd at New-Haven

O N T H E

S A B B A T H preceeding the
Publick Commencement,

Sept. 9th, Anno Dom. 1744.

Wherein is considered the true Notion of a

F A I T H F U L

Improvement of our TALENTS,

A N D T H E

Wisdom of being *Early* & in *Earnest* therein.

By Chauncey Whittelsey A.M.

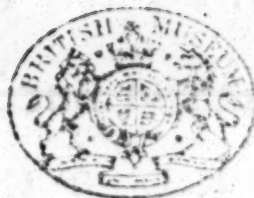
T U T O R of Yale-College in New-Haven.

Eccl. xii. 10.

*The Preacher sought to find out acceptable Words,
and that which was upright, even Words of Truth*

N L O N D O N ;

Printed and Sold by T. GREEN, 1744

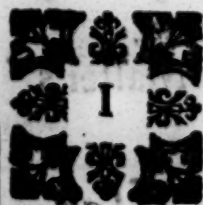
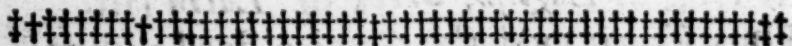




TO THE
C L A S S
G R A D U A T E D

Anno Domini, 1744.

Occasioned by the *S E R M O N* preached
upon the Sabbath before their Com-
mencement, by their Excellent Tutor
the Ingenious Mr. *C H A U N C E T*
W H I T T E L S E Y.



If you would be what this Dis-
course design'd,
Some great Example always
keep in Mind ;

The

A P O E M.

The Force of Reason may command Assent,
But living Vertue gives a President ;
How all it's sacred Rules in Practice shine,
And speaks the Pattern and themselves
divine :

That gains the Understanding to approve ;
This courts the Will, with all the Charms
of Love.

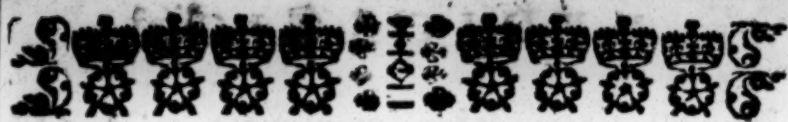
The *Author* then, before you always place,
And when you read his Precepts, view
his Face.

In them you're only told how to be great,
In him you plainly see that happy state :
Strain ev'ry Nerve, on ev'ry Feature gaze ;
The more you imitate, the more you praise :
If near the bright Example you arrive,
Your Names with his shall mouldring
Time survive ;

From Age to Age with great Applause be past
As long as *English, Greek* or *Latin* last.

Thus *Virgil* ey'd the *Grecian* Bard divine,
And aim'd at *Homer's* strength in ev'ry Line :
He very near the noble Copy came,
And rail'd his own, on his great Master's
Fame.

J. HUBBARD *Esqr.*



TO THE
Young Gentlemen

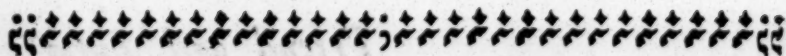
GRADUATED

BACHELORS OF ARTS

AT

Dale-College,

Sept. 12th, 1744.



THE following Lines were penn'd
with a peculiar Eye to your In-
struction and Benefit ; and what

DEDICATION.

ever Reception they may meet with from Mankind (whose Candour I crave) I securely trust them with You, being perswaded that You will peruse them with delight, as they were composed by your hearty Friend, under the Influence of an upright desire to know and speak the Truth. I recommend them to you as an honest Token of my real concern for your Usefulness and final Happiness : And as they are now made publick at your Request and Charge, they are therefore justly inscribed and presented to you.

By your Affectionate and Faithful

Friend and Tutor,

Chauncey Whittelsey.

TO



THE
Nature and Wisdom
OF A
Faithful Improvement
OF OUR
TALENTS.

MATTHEW XXV. 29.

*For unto every One that hath shall be given,
and he shall have abundance.*



THESE are the words of Jesus
Christ our great Teacher, Lord
and Saviour ; the Discourse
He is here upon is the Parable
of the Talents, by which is re-
presented

presented to us in a lively manner the Obligation we lye under, as Moral Agents, honestly and faithfully to improve the Powers and Advantages we severally enjoy : And as this will be my chief aim in the ensuing Discourse, it will not be an improper Digression from my main Subject, to give a general & plain Exposition of the whole Parable ; in doing which I will give the Story in brief and in my own Language, with the Spirit, the Application of it, desiring each one for himself to regard the text as I go along.

The Parable begins at the 14th Verse of this Chapter, and is introduced to illustrate and enforce the Exhortation offer'd in the verse preceeding V. 13th, *Watch ye therefore, for ye know not the Day nor the Hour in which the Son of man cometh.* As tho' he had said, Since you are wholly uncertain when the Bridegroom, the great Head of the Church and Judge of the World will come and call you to an account, therefore stand ye prepared continually, be always vigilant and industrious in the Service assign'd you in the World. Then follows the Parable, *For the Kingdom of Heaven is as a Man travelling, &c.* Or (as in the Original, *Ὁσπερ ἄρ' ἄνθρωπος ἀποσεμόν,*) *It is as a Man travelling, &c.* As tho' he had said, The Matter I
am

am upon, the Reasonableness and Importance of this Exhortation, may be aptly represented by this Similitude. *A Man being about to travel into some distant Country, call'd together his Servants, and distributed his estate among them, to be taken care of and improv'd by them in his absence: but he divides his Goods among them, not equally, but for wise Reasons he committed to one a much greater portion of his Estate than to another; to one he gave five Talents, to another two, to another one. Having thus wisely settled his business at home, he set out on his Journey. . . Thus God deals with Mankind. The Heathen World in general, he left to the Guidance of their own rational Powers, and the small assistance of some obscure Traditions; The Jewish Nation he favour'd more highly: to them at sundry times and in divers manners he spake and made known his Will by the Prophets: But in these last days he hath spoken unto us still more fully and clearly by his Son. So likewise among particular Men in the same Age and under the same Dispensation, some are favour'd with richer Advantages to know and more and stronger Motives to practice, the Will of God, than others.*

The Similitude goes on, V. 16th, Those Servants with whom the Master had intrusted his Estate behav'd very differently in their Lord's absence: Some, by their honest Industry, made those Improvements which were reasonably to be expected; whilst others carelessly neglected, or ungratefully misimprov'd their Lord's Money: He that had receiv'd five Talents gain'd other five, but he that had receiv'd one went and hid it in the Earth. Thus Mankind act toward God, the great Landlord of the World: Some, like rational Beings set themselves diligently to Study the Will of their Maker, and faithfully to improve the Powers they are endow'd with, and the advantages of every kind that they enjoy, for gaining useful Knowledge, cultivating vertuous Habits, and doing good in their day; while others spend their time in Idleness, or consume their Strength in Vanity and Wickedness.

To proceed, V. 19th, After a while the Lord of those Servants returns home, and calls them all to an account for their Conduct and the Improvement they had severally made of that Portion of his Estate which he had becrusted them with; accordingly they all appear before him, and now their Reception with their Lord is as different as their

their Conduct was in the Improvement of his Money : They that had wisely and industriously applied themselves to their Lord's Service, were accepted, commended and rewarded : But they that had been foolishly negligent ; and had unjustly misimprov'd their Time and Talents, were frowned upon, condemned and punished. --- And thus God the great Lord and Judge of the World, will deal with Men : They, who have thankfully received and wisely improv'd the Gifts of Heaven, for the advancing the noble Designs of divine Goodness, who have honestly sought after and conscientiously practised the righteous Will of God, they will be accepted with approbation & applause, and honourably rewarded ; each one in a Just Proportion to his particular Improvements : On the other hand the Wicked and the Slothful will be cloathed with shame, publickly condemned and deservedly punished. --- This is the Substance of the Parable, with the true Meaning the Application thereof : And herein we are plainly taught (amongst others) these several things.

I. That all Moral Agents are endowed with some Powers and Advantages to know and do that which is right, Yea, that so far and no farther than any Being is thus qualify'd can be

be call'd a *Moral Agent*, or be conceiv'd of as accountable. This might be demonstrated from the Reason of things ; And may be plainly learn'd from this Parable. No Servants are call'd to an Account but by the Master, Improvements are expected of none, but those to whom he hath committed a greater or less Portion of his Goods ; and for that and that only they are accountable, each one for what he had receiv'd.

2. By this Parable we are taught, that God the great Giver of all, distributes Powers and Advantages differently to different *Moral Agents*, and that according to his own sovereign and wise Pleasure. Thus the Lord in the Parable divides his estate among his Servants, unequally and according to his own Will, yet wisely, committing a Portion to the Care of every one according to his several Ability : So the great Lord of Heaven and Earth deals with Men ; And tho' he herein always acts in the best manner, and upon the highest Reasons, Yet being Sovereign, that is Unaccountable ; the Reasons of the divine Conduct are frequently beyond the reach of our Knowledge, and sometimes undoubtedly inconceivable to any but an infinite Mind.

3. This Parable gives us the true Notion of a Religious Life, and a just Representation of the

the Importance of it. The Parable (as has been already observ'd) was introduced to illustrate and enforce the Exhortation in the Verse immediately preceeding, an Exhortation to be Religious, so to live as to be prepar'd for the coming of the Son of Man; Now what is it that is requir'd of the Servants in the Parable ? it is that they faithfully improve the Talents they are entrusted with ; and they that so do make great gains thereby, and are graciously accepted and amply rewarded by their Lord at last. In like manner, what God expects of Men is an honest and faithful Improvement of the Powers and Advantages they enjoy while in the state of Probation : Such is the Good Man, the faithful Servant, this is the true Notion of the Religious, the Vertuous Life: And this is the Beginning of Wisdom, this will greatly redound to our Benefit here, and to our Happiness for ever. -- By this Observation I am naturally led to a particular Consideration of the Words of the text : which are immediately occasion'd by the Sentence denounc'd against the wicked and slothful Servant, V. 28th, *Take from him therefore the Talent, and give to him that hath ten Talents ;* then follows the Text thus, *For to every one that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance. ---* So that the
Words

Words are introduc'd as a general Proposition; shewing the Wisdom & Equity of the divine Conduct in taking from the wicked and slothful Servant, the one Talent, which he had; but had misimprov'd, and giving it to him who had many and had improv'd them faithfully. The Text therefore may be thus explain'd, *to him that hath*; that is, to him that honestly and faithfully improves what he has, the Talents he enjoys, the Powers and Advantages God hath graciously favour'd him with, *to him shall be given and he shall have abundance*: That is, to him God of his Goodness will grant still more, he may reasonably hope for and expect an increase of his Talents, and that in Proportion to his Fidelity and Industry. That this is the true Meaning of these Words, we may be further convinc'd by viewing them and observing how they are introduc'd and applied in other Places: particularly they are us'd in Luk. XIX. 26. and at the Conclusion of the Parable of the Sower, as related by the three Evangelists, † Matthew, Mark and Luke: In all which Places the Explication above given, does (as far as I can judge) contain their full and proper Sense. I am also confirm'd in this Interpretation, by the concur-

† Math. xiii. 12. Mar. iv. 25. Luk. viii. 18.

ring Judgment of the best || Expositors both
antient and modern ----- Wherefore in
discourſing on theſe Words I will attempt,

1. To explain more largely what we are
to underſtand by having as us'd in the text,
or what is implied in a faithful Improve-
ment of the Talents we are betruſted with,

2. To prove that they who thus have,
who well and faithfully improve, may reaſo-
nably hope and expect, that their Talents will
be increaſed, for their further Advancement.

I. Firſt then, I am to explain more
largely, what we are to underſtand by *having*,
as us'd in the Text, or, what is implied in
a *faithful Improvement of the Talents we are*
betruſted with. By the Talents we are be-
trufteſt with, I underſtand *our Powers and Ad-*
vantages, what ever we enjoy that may be
made uſe of for the intereſt of Religion,
and the advancement of Vertue in our ſelves,
or others, or any way for the doing of Good.
By improving them, I mean, *the actual uſing*
them to thoſe Purpoſes ; By improving them
faithfully, I underſtand, *being prudent and*
induftrious therein, as a Servant that is faithful

|| Chryſoſtom, Grotius, Hammond, Daddrigde, &c.

in the Business of his Master ; so that to improve faithfully our Talents, is to act up to the Station in which our Wise & Bountiful Creator hath plac'd us, it is to be Sincerely and industriously Religious. Thus much in general, to be a little more particular.

1. It is implied in a faithful Improvement of the Talents *we enjoy, as we are rational Beings*, that we act up to the Dignity of our Natures. Now this supposes, that we aim at good Ends and act upon Just Principles ; *that we aim at good Ends* ; that we propose to our selves and prosecute some noble and worthy Designs ; such as being sincerely religious, doing good in our places, as we have Ability and Opportunity, and the like ; *that we act upon Principles* ; Principles that are intelligible and just, Principles that we have examin'd into and understand, and find to be supported by proper Evidence, Principles of Importance and Worth, that is, such as nearly concern our Happiness, and which being believed and meditated upon, tend to influence us to prosecute the great and good Ends above mention'd. These (*acting for good ends and upon just Principles*) seem to be the proper foundation of all rational Conduct : that without which there can be no Vertue, no Religion. For no Action, or

Series

Series of Actions, unless they be the Product of rational Consideration ; unless the Being performs them to obtain some desirable End, and under the influence of just Motives, can be call'd vertuous, nor would the Agent therefor be the proper subject of Approbation or Reward ; he would not have acted up to the Dignity of his Nature as a rational Being, he would not have acted to the divine Acceptance. And I may add here, that to act like reasonable Beings, supposes also that we Prosecute these great Designs *in right Ways*, in all suitable Methods, in the diligent and steady Use of all proper Means, that lie within our reach, which brings me to add,

2. It is implied in a faithful Improvement of our Talents, *as we enjoy the Gospel*, that we live Christianity, in the Language of the Apostle †, that *we walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are called* : A faithful Improvement of the Gospel ; that Pearl of great price, implies that we acquiesce in that way of Reconciliation therein reveal'd ; that we thankfully put our trust in the Mercy of God, through the Merits of Christ for Pardon and Acceptance ; that we look up to God for that divine Assistance which we stand in

† Eph. iv. 1.

need of and which the Gospel directs us to ask and hope for ; that we study after the Truth as reveal'd therein, the Truth as it is in Jesus with an unbiass'd Mind ; with a Disposition to receive it in the Love of it ; that we believe it's Doctrins, that we practise it's Precepts ; that we meditate on it's Motives till our Minds are duly and steadily influenc'd by them ; in short, it implies, that we be such as the Gospel requires we should be ; that we be fully, even practically taught by it, in the words of St. Paul ||, *to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly righteously and godly in this present World, looking for that blessed Hope and the glorious Appearance of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all Iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works,*

3. It is implied in a faithful Improvement of our Talents, *as we are favour'd with any special Privileges of getting or doing Good ;* that we use them prudently and industriously, in subserviency to those great Ends. Particularly, that they, who are rich, prudently take care of the good things Providence has dealt out to them, Yet † *that they trust not*

|| Tit. ii, 12, 13, 14. † 1 Tim. vi, 17, 18.

in uncertain Riches, but in the Living God, -- that they be rich in good Works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; forward to promote valuable and useful Designs, for the Glory of God and the Welfare of Men ; that they, who by reason of their Station in the World have any special Influence over their fellow Men either by their Examples, Instruction or Authority, that they, I say, make use of that Influence so as to advance the same great Ends, and that with all the Prudence and Skill that they can : Again, that they, who in the Providence of God are favour'd with singular Advantages for getting Knowledge, that they apply themselves to close Study, and an unbiass'd Search after Truth, *Truth*, which is both the Ornament and Food of the Mind, and by the Increase of which we shall be able the more successfully to promote our own and our Neighbours Good, and to glorifie God not only *intentionally*, but *really, rationally and extensively* ; In like manner a faithful Improvement of our Talents supposes, that every Advantage of every kind and in whatever degree we enjoy it, be applied with Prudence and Industry to the same valuable Purposes. For in Proportion as some Men enjoy greater Advantages to make Progress in Religion and be extensively useful, than others,

others, so in the same Proportion more is justly expected of them than of others, and that whether those Advantages are such as are call'd natural or acquir'd, whether they result from our Make and Constitution, or from the Dispensations of divine Providence, or Grace, *they are all the Gifts of Heaven*, Talents that we are entrusted with by the Wise and Bountiful Father of the Universe; to be improv'd for his Glory and the Good of Mankind. I proceed now to the second thing propos'd.

II. To prove that they who thus *have*, who *well and faithfully improve*, may reasonably hope and expect that their Talents will be increas'd, for their further Advancement. Thus God is wont to deal with Men, such is the Method of the divine Conduct in the moral Government of the World, as might be argued from the Perfections of God, may be learn'd from the Word of God, and is indisputably evident from Experience and Observation; For it is to be noted, that this Increase of our Talents may proceed either from the kind Distributions and wise Orderings of divine Providence, or from the special Influences of the good Spirit of God, or it may be the natural Consequence of Custom and Practice. But to be particular.

I. That

1. That our Talents will be increas'd by a faithful Improvement of what we have, may be argued *from the Perfections of God*. Not indeed that by any thing we can do, we can bring God under any Obligation to us, unless as he is pleas'd to oblige himself by his own gracious Promise; but the Argument from the Perfections of God is to this Purpose, *viz.* that it is agreeable to the Goodness of God as the kind Father of the Universe, and to his infinite Wisdom as the Moral Governour of the World, in this manner to distribute his free, his unmerited Favours. Is it not justly esteem'd a wise Method of acting in an earthly Prince towards those under his Care and Authority, to make those Rulers over much, who have approv'd themselves faithful in a little? Is it not then fitting that we should conclude, that in the same Method God deals with Men? is not this most to the divine Honour? Is there not the highest reason for us to think, that tho' God is indeed a Sovereign, neither may any say unto the Almighty, what dost thou, Yet that he is wise in dispensing his Favours, that he governs the World according to the exactest Rules of consummate Wisdom? need we then fear to entertain such agreeable, such honourable thoughts of the Deity?

Again,

Again, is it not a Design worthy of a God of infinite Goodness and unerring Rectitude, and Holiness, to promote the *Vertue and so the Happiness* of moral Agents, who are the most excellent Parts of the Creation? And will it not have a direct tendency (as far as we can judge of the reason and nature of things) to promote this great and good End; if God in the Dispensations of his Providence and Grace, confers the richest Favours on those who endeavour most rationally and vigorously to be such as he would have them to be, to be Pious and Good? or in other words, if God most Wise distributes the best, even *Spiritual Blessings*, grants more Talents to those, who are honest and faithful in improving, what they now enjoy, who lay out themselves in good earnest to be sincerely religious, truly Good and extensively useful?

Wherefore tho' *God's Judgments are a great Deep and his Ways* many times past finding out, tho' it becomes us always to be modest in our Determinations concerning God most high and his Dealings with his Creatures, yet may we not conclude from the reasoning above, at least, with a good Degree of Probability, that this is the standing Rule of the divine Conduct toward Men, to grant
greater

greater Grace, more Talents to those who have been really faithful and industrious in improving what they have been already entrusted with ? Tho' God dwells in Light inaccessible, and none by searching can find him out ; tho' as to us Clouds and Darkness are round about him, yet have we not abundant Reason from the Discoveries God hath made of himself, to say in the sublime Language of the inspir'd Psalmist, † that Justice and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne, and || that the righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, and his Countenance beholdeth the Upright, that he will therefore so bless them that walk uprightly, that the Path of the Just shall be as the shining Light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect Day.

That our Talents will be increas'd by a faithful Improvement of what we have, may be learn't from the Word of God. What else can be the Meaning of the Words of the Text, but according to the Exposition before given ? The Words indeed seem to have been a Proverb, that was common in our Saviour's Day, which was usually applied to secular Affairs, signifying that those Servants, who had been faithful in their Masters

† Psal. lxxxix. 14. || Psal. xi. 7.

Business, were won't to be exalted, and to have a larger Portion of Goods committed to their Care : this Saying our Great Lord and Master here and in sundry other Places applies to things of a religious Nature ; designing hereby to signify, at least, thus much, that this is the general Rule of the divine Conduct as the moral Governour of the World, viz. to grant *more Grace, more Power and richer Advantages* to those who have been faithful in their past Improvements. These words therefore will warrant our hoping and expecting this effect of a faithful Improvement of what we have, For surely God will not *suffer his faithfulness to fail* ; He will compleatly answer the Character given of him in Sacred writ as a Being of unshaken Fidelity ; What ever Encouragement he has given any of his Creatures to trust in him, He will, *without all doubt*, in every Case, act fully up to it.

Moreover, the Gospel throughout teaches us to think and reason of God and his dealings with Men, as under the last particular : Luk. XI. 13. *If ye then being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Once more,

3. That

3. That our Talents (at least many of them) will be increas'd by a faithful Improvement of what we have, is indisputably evident *from Experience and Observation*. That the Influence of Custom is exceeding great, every one will be irresistably convinc'd, who critically observes himself or his fellow Men. An Action, which at first was not to be perform'd, but with much difficulty and Labour, by Custom, or a frequent Repetition, becomes easie and delightfom ; that is, the Power we have to do the same Action or Actions of the same Kind, our natural Powers, by a repeated successful exercise, are increas'd, or exercised with more ease and success, and that many times in a great and unaccountable manner, when the Attempts, the Efforts in the exercise of them are frequent and vigorous ; or, as applied to the present Case, thus, *the rational Study and industrious Practice of Vertue, will render it easie and delightfom*, and a Man will thereby be enabled to proceed, to make Progress therein, to still greater and greater Degrees of Perfection. — Agreeable hereto has been the Observation of the Wisest Men, and best Writers upon humane Nature in all Ages ; accordingly this is one of the Precepts which Pythagoras is said to have deliver'd to his Disciples, *Optimum vitæ Genus*

eligito & Consuetudo faciet jucundissimum, choose that Course of Life, which is most excellent, and Custom will render it the most delightful. Yea, Mankind have so generally made this Observation, that it has obtain'd as a common Proverb, that *Use is a second Nature*, which is not more vulgar than true; the Meaning of which I take to be this, that an Action by being frequently practis'd, becomes as familiar and easie, as if we were prompted thereto by some natural Biass or Inclination of Mind.

And as our natural Powers do thus grow stronger by proper exercise, so our Advantages of gaining Knowledge and practising Vertue, are naturally enlarg'd by a faithful Improvement. This is evident thus; whatever Knowledge we obtain by an honest and faithful Improvement of the Advantages, we now enjoy, may *it self* be made Use of, as a proper Means to gain still further Knowledge; and as our Knowledge is increas'd, so our Obligations, our Motives to the Practice of that, which is right, are also increas'd; And the Considerations, the Motives, by which we are excited to the Practice of our Duty are won't to have continually more Weight and Influence upon the Mind, by being seriously meditated and diligently practis'd

practis'd upon. This I will attempt to make more obvious by an Instance ; — The Revelation of the Gospel is a great Advantage we enjoy : Now, by honestly studying the more plain and intelligible Parts of this Revelation, we gain that Knowledge, which may be it self a great Advantage to us, whereby to understand the more obscure and difficult Parts and Passages of it ; and the better we understand the Gospel, the more shall we become acquainted with the Inducements, that are therein set before us, to the Practice of Religion ; and the more we ponder upon those Inducements, upon the Blessings held forth in the Promises of the Gospel, the more valuable are they won't to appear ; and the more necessary to make us truly happy, and so they will have the greater Influence on our Minds. Thus it is evident *from Experience and Observation* that our Talents will be (*such is the Nature of the Humane Soul*) increas'd by a faithful Improvement.

Wherefore, and to conclude this Proposition, if God is a Being of absolute Perfection, if the Encouragements of the Gospel may be depended upon, yea if we may credit our own Observations upon humane Nature, or upon our own Minds, then have

we

we Just reason to hope and expect that our Talents will be increas'd, if we well and faithfully use what we have, *to every one that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance.*

I will now make some Improvement of this Discourse under this one plain and important Inference, viz.

Hence we see the great Wisdom of being early and in earnest in improving the Talents that we are severally entrusted with. He that begins soon, who sets out upon this Business in the Morning of his Days, in the Bloom of Life, and applies himself hereto with Vigour and unwearied Industry, he will flourish like the *Palm Tree* and grow like the *Cedar in Lebanon*. And are not the Thoughts of advancing the *Dignity* and *Perfection* of our Natures, of rising into a more exalted Sphere among Intelligences; are not the Hopes of becoming more nearly allied to the Superiour Spirits of the Angelical World, are not these sufficient to fire our Breasts with a holy *Ambition*, to animate our *Zeal*, to strengthen our *Resolutions*, that we will make this the *incessant* Pursuit of our Lives?

But they who are in their youthful Days, are more especially regarded in this Inference;
the

the Exhortation therefrom speaketh as unto Children, to those who are in the *Spring of Life* : to them therefore I will offer a few thoughts, chiefly such as are suggested by the preceeding Discourse ; the which as they may be profitable to all, so I recommend them particularly to the Consideration of those *Youth of this Assembly*, who enjoy peculiar Advantages for gaining useful Knowledge, and whose Good I am bound, by the Station in which Providence hath plac'd me, especially to consult. Wherefore that you may be fully, even *practically* convinc'd that it is a point of the *highest Wisdom* for you to be *early* and *in earnest* in improving the Talents you are betruſted with, Consider,

1. Hereby you will keep out *vicious Habits*, which will otherwise take Poſſeſſion and quickly get *deep rooted* in the Soul. The Mind of Man is like a Garden ; the which, unless it be prudently taken Care of, and steadily manur'd will be soon overrun with Weeds, with Briars and Thorns : which when once they have got the Poſſeſſion, can *hardly* be rooted out again, the which notwithstanding muſt be effected before the Ground will yield any profitable Increase. So the Minds of Men, unless they are prudently and diligently taken care of, unless they

they *early* and *in earnest* apply themselves to the Improvement of their Talents, to the right use of their Powers, they will quickly become *habituated* to do evil. Those that are indolent and vicious will naturally and by the strange Influence of Custom wax *worse and worse* : to them, the gaining of true Knowledge and the Practice of Vertue and the Exercise of real Piety will become *more and more* difficult ; this will be the natural and *sure* Consequence of their Negligence and Wickedness. By neglecting Study & Labour, honest Enquiries after their Duty & manly Efforts in doing it, Men become *more and more* averse thereto. Errors, being entertain'd for truths without a through Examination, Prejudices being long indulg'd become *deep-rooted* and have such a *Sovereign Command* in the Soul, that it is almost impossible to get freed from them, or to escape their destructive Influence. Rational Resolutions having been repeatedly drawn up, and as repeatedly violated, at length become weak and insignificant ; and the Man, like the door on its Hinges, is easily mov'd backwards and forwards ; tho' he frequently makes some Efforts toward a Reformation, yet, *Unhappy* ! they are so languid and faint that they prove *wholly ineffectual*. Again, The Passions, by unreasonable Compliances gain Strength *mightily*, and become

come Lordly and uncontrollable, demanding and obtaining of the Man a quick Obedience to their Sovereign Dictates. And for such a one to learn to do well is like the *Ethiopian's changing his Skin and the Leopard his Spots.* Unhappy Man, who, when ever his Eyes shall be open'd by Serious Consideration, will weep over himself and with an aking heart cry out and say, *Oh ! that I had known in my Day the things of my Peace !* For to free the Mind from Prejudices, that have been long receiv'd, to mortify vicious Inclinations, which have grown strong by Custom, and to subdue old Habits, that are become stubborn and deep rooted in the Soul, this is like cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right Eye ; 'tis like tearing the Flesh from the Bones, and is not to be effected, but by great pains and Sorrow, by repeated severe Resolutions, and with the utmost Difficulty. Is it not then desirable, is it not a point of great Wisdom for You to avoid this unhappy Condition by being early and in good earnest in improving the Talents, which you are severally entrusted with ? Consider,

2. Hereby you will engage the divine Favour and Blessing with you in all your Ways, and have just Reason quietly to confide in the Providence of God for a sufficient Supply
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of the Good things of this Life. This is clearly evident and may be justly concluded from the moral Perfections of God, his Regard to Vertue, his Approbation and Care of them, *that walk uprightly before him, who make it their daily Business to serve God and their Generation faithfully.* There are also in the Word of God many Passages expresse to this Purpose; even too many to be enumerated here; *I have been Young, says the Psalmist. and now am old, yet have I not seen the Righteous forsaken, or his Seed begging Bread, Psal. XXXVII. 25.* Agreeably our Saviour says to his Disciples, Mat VI. 31, &c. *Therefore take no thought, that is, be not anxiously concerned, saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be cloathed, - For your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you, that is, as far as God in his Wisdom shall see to be best.* And verily this is an *inestimable* Blessing: what every wise considerate Soul would esteem the *richest*, the *best* Portion, that could fall to his Lot in the World. What more valuable Inheritance could any one wish for himself, or his *dearest* Friend; yea what better could a *tender* Father crave for his *only* Son, than this, that he be always under the *fatherly* Care
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and Protection of Almighty God ; that he have his Portion dealt out to him by infinite Wisdom and Goodness engag'd for his good, so that he have just reason to think that even when he is afflicted, God All-wise does hereby but chasten him, as a Father a Son in whom he delighteth, for his Profit, that he may be made Partaker of his Holiness ; this is indeed the most happy state of Existence, that Earth can boast, than which as to this Life no Mortal can frame a higher Wish. Surely then, I may recommend it to you as a point of the greatest Wisdom, that you apply your selves early and in earnest to the Improvement of the Talents committed to your Care. Especially if you consider also,

3. By this means you will be useful in the World. This is evident from the Nature of a faithful Improvement of our Talents, as before explain'd. And what can be a more agreeable Self-reflection than this, to be conscious that we have been designedly the means of Happiness to our fellow Men ? that we have labouriously endeavour'd, as we had Power and Opportunity, to alleviate their Sorrows and promote their Welfare ? What Pleasure more Heavenly and Godlike ? What can afford a more solid and manly

self-Approbation than, to be conscious, that we have in our Sphere of Action been imitating the *Fountain of Happiness*, who is Good unto all, and whose tender Mercies are over all his Works, and of whose Goodness we our selves have largely receiv'd. Doubtless this is such *Solid Delight* as renders it a Point of true *Wisdom* for you who are yet in the Morning of your Days to pursue it diligently, and accordingly to apply your selves quickly and with *Intenseness* to the faithful Improvement of the Talents, you are entrusted with. I might add here, that this, your being thus useful in the World, will be the most effectual Way to cause your Names to survive with Honour when you are dead; For it has been an ancient Observation, that how *injudiciously* and *partially* so ever the World treats Mens Characters, while they live, yet when their Bodies are mouldred to Dust, their Names are generally us'd with a more just and equal Regard to their Deserts. Such was the wise Observation of King Solomon, Prov. X 7. *The Memory of the Just is blessed; but the Name of the Wicked shall rot.* And this, tho' it be not the most weighty Consideration, yet is it not below the lawful desire of a *Wise Man*, or a *Saint*.

4. By the Improvement of your Talents you will stand continually prepared for Death, and while you live, will become daily more and more ripe for Glory. How ever your Names may be unjustly treated by Men, yet God, the Father of your Spirits, will assuredly deal with you in Mercy and Faithfulness. They who are diligently imployed in their Lord's Business ; who are like a faithful Servant prudently waiting for his Master's Coming, they when ever they shall be seized by the King of Terrors, may calmly give up the Ghost, trusting safely in the Grace and Truth of God, who will not take his loving Kindness from them, nor suffer his Faithfulness to fail.

And as all, who are thus faithful to the Death, shall receive a Crown of Life, so each one will finally be advanced in Glory in Proportion as he had made Progress in Grace and excell'd in good Works ; He that gains ten Pounds, will be made Ruler over ten Cities. They, who having been early and in earnest in improving their Talents, have brought forth much Fruit and been singularly Vertuous, they shall shine as the Stars for ever and ever. Since then these things are so, what manner of Persons ought you to be ? Is it not a point of true Wisdom and of great Importance

Importance for you to apply your selves *immediately* and *diligently* to the Improvement of the Talents committed to your Care?

It now only remains that I conclude with a brief Address to those at whose desire and for whose Sake especially this Discourse was composed.

MY BELOVED PUPILS,

You have been (as I trust you are sensible) the Objects of my *daily Concern* for years past, while I have been endeavouring *in the Integrity of my Heart and with the Skilfulness of my Hands*, to season your Minds with useful Knowledge and to win your Hearts to the Love and Practice of Vertue : And now your Welfare here and hereafter ; your Usefulness on Earth and Happiness in Heaven, I acknowledge, do justly claim a share in my fervent Wishes ; Accordingly, it is among the Sincere and most ardent Desires of my Soul, that you may be Blessings in your Day, and Blessed for ever ; The which will surely be your *happy Portion*, if you are but faithful in improving, what God, the Great Householder, your Creator, and *Heavenly Father* has committed to your trust. Let me then direct you, yea let me

me beseech you to esteem and treat *this* as the great Work, the main, the proper Business of your Lives, to make *this* your constant Employ.

Let it be the honest Aim of your Minds, the Centre of all your Schemes, the Drift of all your Actions, to promote *the noble Designs of infinite Goodness*, to advance the Interests of solid Religion and the Good of Men. — And in pursuing these worthy Designs, take for your Guide that Rule, which your *All-wise and faithful Law-giver* has favour'd you with, the *Holy Scriptures*; *The Law of the Lord is perfect*, converting the Soul; *The Testimony of the Lord is pure*, making wise the Simple; *the Statutes of the Lord are right*, rejoycing the Heart; *the Commandment of the Lord is pure*, enlightning the Eyes; *the Fear of the Lord is clean*, enduring for ever; *the Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether*. — Take care to act always upon Principles that are *intelligible and just*; examine carefully and impartially the Principles which you imbibe; their *Meaning and Evidence*; see that, *like Men*, you understand in what Sense and *why* you believe them; It can never be pleasing to God, it can't be becoming a rational Being, it can't be serviceable to true Religion, that
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we should believe we know not *what* or *why*. — In the Improvement of all your peculiar Privileges, be *prudent* as well as *industrious* : Such is the faithful Servant ; he is one that is not only active, but also Considerate and Thoughtful how he may accomplish his Master's Business to the best advantage ; so *here* : In this Business you will stand in need of Skill and Fore-thought ; here is Room for the profitable exercise of much *Prudence* and *Sagacity* wisely to pitch upon those Ways of living, to contrive those Methods of acting, to project and judiciously to Scan and perfect in the Mind those particular *Schemes*, which will be most serviceable to the great Ends of your Being. — And as you must be thus Prudent and Wise to do Good ; so let me exhort and perswade you to be *very industrious* ; this Matter both requires and deserves the greatest Diligence ; *Incline your Ears unto Wisdom* and apply your Heart to Understanding ; yea, cry after Knowledge and lift up your Voice for Understanding ; seek her as Silver, and search for her as for hid Treasure ; For happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding ; the Merchandise thereof is better than the Merchandise of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold ; she is more precious than

than Rubies, and all the things you can desire
 are not to be compar'd unto her. — And as you
 are but entering upon the active Part of Life,
 your Experience being yet but small, and
 your Passions lively and strong, you will find
 that you lie much expos'd to the Violence
 of Temptations, which will many times assault
 you on a sudden, at a time and in a manner
 you expected them not; be exhorted there-
 fore to seek daily Assistance from God, and
 to accustom your selves to frequent, serious
 Meditation on the great Motives of the
 Gospel, that by this means you may cultivate
 that strength of Resolution and steadfastness
 of Mind, by which you may be habitually
 prepar'd for, and may successfully withstand
 your Enemies. — These thoughts, to-
 gether with what was offer'd more generally
 in the preceeding Discourse, I, in sincere
 Friendship and concern for your Welfare,
 recommend to your serious Consideration. For
 if these things be in you, they will cause
 that you be not barren or unfruitful; Hereby
 you will become Plants of Renown, such as
 both God and Men will delight to honour;
 Hereby you will be Blessings to the Places,
 where you shall live, a Credit to your res-
 pective Families, a Comfort, a Joy to your
 Parents; and by this means you will
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greatly rejoice my Heart, even mine ;
 Finally as You are about to take your leave
 of me and each other, however we shall
 be separated in Life or at Death, let this,
 whil'st we live be our steady Purpose and
 Conscientious endeavour, to serve God and
 our Generation faithfully in our respective Places,
 then shall we meet together again beyond
 the Grave, and rejoice together in each
 others Friendship and in Glory everlasting,
 which God of his infinite Mercy grant through
 Jesus Christ our Lord, AMEN.



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